International Women's Day 2022, Break the Bias: Celebrating Professor Phoebe Okowa

By:

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For International Women's Day 2022, Afronomicslaw.org is proud to celebrate the brilliant achievements of Professor Phoebe Okowa.

Professor Okowa is a Professor of Public International Law and the Director of Graduate Studies at Queen Mary University of London. She has generalist interests in international law. She has published on a wide range of contemporary international law topics including the interface between state responsibility and individual accountability for international crimes, unilateral and collective responses to protection of natural resources in conflict zones and aspects of the protection of the environment. Her monograph "State Responsibility for Transboundary Air Pollution in International Law" (Oxford University Press 2000) remains the definitive work on the legal challenges that environmental harm presents for traditional methods of accountability in International Law. She serves as Editor of the Foundations of Public

International Law Series and is on the editorial board of the African Journal of International and Comparative Law.

One of Professor Okowa's ground-breaking achievements is her election to the International Law Commission. She was elected to the International Law Commission in November 2021 following her nomination by the Government of Kenya and the Government of the United Kingdom. She obtained 162 votes in the General Assembly. She is the first African woman and the first black woman to be elected to the International Law Commission. Since 1947, the Commission has had a total of 229 Members and only 7 of the elected members have been women. Her term with the Commission officially begins on 1 January 2023 and will run until 2027.

In her communication with Afronomicslaw.org, Professor Okowa explained as follows. "The campaign was a long slog, but I was incredibly well supported especially by my brothers and sisters from our continent. It is difficult to say what I will do once I get to the International Law Commission. It is a collegiate body and much depends on what topics are on its agenda and whether there is scope to suggest or take on new topics. Any proposed new topics must also be acceptable to members of the Commission. However, in my campaign I expressed an interest in the codification of the criteria of statehood and recognition of Governments. This topic has been on the Commission's agenda since 1949 but has always been shelved for political reasons. The crisis in Ukraine, Governmental recognition problems in Myanmar and Venezuela have brought to the fore the many difficult problems in this area. In short, I would be very keen to support the Commission's work on the Statehood topic if it were adopted." Afronomicslaw.org wishes Professor Okowa the very best during her term at the International Law Commission.

Afronomicalaw.org also celebrates all our female contributors and readers. We support the call for a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination. A world that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. We are committed to promoting women's equality, as collectively we can all #BreakTheBias.

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